



before receiving care, compassion and community at her local church.

As a young mum who had fled an abusive relationship, Jenny Garland found herself on a destructive path of alcohol abuse.

"In my early twenties I fell into a fun, party lifestyle, but this soon crossed an invisible line, and I became addicted to alcohol," recalls Jenny (pictured), "I relied on drinking to get me through the day. To the outside world, I was coping; going to work and taking my children to school. But behind closed doors I was struggling.

"After a heavy weekend of drinking I had reached a really low place, looking in the mirror I could see nothing but darkness.

"That same Sunday I received a text message from our local vicar's wife, Amy, inviting me to a barbeque. I replied to say that I couldn't as I was an  
felt desperate for help."



The kindness shown by Amy and her husband Rev Ben Woodfield (pictured), the vicar at the planted church in Oldhams estate in Bolton, was immediate. They welcomed Jenny and her children into their home offering practical and emotional support.

“Ben helped me to see that Jesus was there for me and I didn’t need to look for love in the wrong places. As I sat and prayed, pleading for God to help me, I physically felt a huge weight lifting off my shoulders. This experience was the start of a transformation in my life.

“I had always felt that church was a peaceful place and had a feeling of coming home when stepping through the doors, but I didn’t feel worthy of God’s love. The people at our local planted church on Oldhams estate showed me that God loves me no matter what I had done in the past.

“I was in a dark, lonely place for many years, and alcohol had destroyed my faith, hope and was destroying me and my family. In 2016, I found Oldhams Church and my relationship with Jesus. I haven’t touched a drop of alcohol since. A true miracle from God.”

Six years on, Jenny is now an active member of Oldham’s church. She has completed Bible courses including Alpha and M:Power, helps run the community café and has recently trained as an Authorised Lay Minister.

Her experiences have led her to help others, through a Bible-based recovery programme called ‘Celebrate Recovery’. Jenny co-runs the women’s group helping others suffering with addiction to overcome the disease.

The future is bright for Jenny and her next goal is to train as a Christian counsellor; she is working on her Level 3 counselling course and assisting with prison chaplaincy work. Jenny’s compassion, empathy and love of Jesus shines out of her as she goes about this work.

The Diocese of Manchester’s estate churches, working out of our community centres and other public buildings, are able to reach out to local people and sharing Jesus’ message. The work they carry out makes a real difference to the lives of local people and Jenny’s story is a testament to the support they can offer.

- *Supported by Strategic Development Funding, Oldhams church was established six years ago, and was the first church planted by the Antioch Network - they now have 10 churches. The Antioch Network works within the **Diocese of Manchester** with the aim of growing disciples of Jesus and serving those living in some of the area’s most disadvantaged communities. You can read more about the initiative in this **interview with Ben and Amy Woodfield**.*



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